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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-09 IO-10 ISO-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15

RSC-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6562
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USMISSION USUN NY

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 1111

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, EG, UR
SUBJ: SOVIET COMMENTS ON SADAT, PROSPECTS FOR BREZHNEV'S ME TRIP

1. SUMMARY. IN A RECENT TALK WITH EMBOFF A NOVOSTI PRESS AGENCY STAFF MEMBER DISCOUNTED THE IDEA THAT BREZHNEV WILL RESCHEDULE HIS ME TRIP ANY TIME SOON. SADAT WAS STRONGLY CRITICIZED AND PORTRAYED AS AN IRRESPONSIBLE AND IRRATIONAL LEADER. THE GENEVA CONFERENCE RECEIVED EXPECTED SUPPORT AS THE ONLY FORUM FOR SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS TOWARD A ME SETTLEMENT. THE POSSIBILITY OF A FURTHER EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI DISENGAGEMENT IN SINAI WAS TREATED WITH SKEPTICISM. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING A RECENT CONVERSATION AT A REPRESENTATIONAL
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FILM SHOWING AT SPASO HOUSE, ALEKSANDR KOROVIN, A

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STAFF MEMBER OF NOVOSTI PRESS AGENCY'S INFORMATION
DEPARTMENT, DISCUSSED THE CANCELLATION OF BREZHNEV'S
ME TRIP AND THE STATE OF SOVIET-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS.
ASKED WHETHER THE BREZHNEV ME TRIP WOULD BE RESCHEDULED
IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS -- EGYPTIANS HERE INDICATED THAT
IT MIGHT TAKE PLACE IN FEBRUARY OR MARCH -- KOROVIN
SAID "WE DO NOT EXPECT A VISIT SOON." KOROVIN
ATTRIBUTED THE CANCELLATION OF THE VISIT TO THE
"GENERAL POLITICAL SITUATION" IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND
TO THE UNLIKELIHOOD THAT A SADAT-BREZHNEV MEETING
WOULD HAVE PRODUCED RESULTS COMMENSURATE WITH SUMMIT
LEVLE TALKS. HE DID NOT MENTION BREZHNEV'S HEALTH
IN TALKINO ABOUT THE VISIT'S POSTPONEMENT.

3. WHEN ASKED WHAT RESULTS MIGHT HAVE JUSTIFIED A
SUMMIT, KOROVIN REFERRED IN PASSING TO DIFFERENT SOVIET
AND EGYPTIAN VIEWS ON THE GENEVA CONFERENCE, BUT
CONCENTRATED MOSTLY ON UNUSUALLY CANDID CRITICISM OF
SADAT. HE REFERRED DISPARAGINGLY TO SADAT'S RECENT
INTERVIEWS "WHICH HE GIVES ONE AFTER ANOTHER" AND PROTRAYED
SADAT AS IRRESPONSIBLE, UNPREDICTABLE AND IRRATIONAL.
AMONG EXAMPLES WHICH KOROVIN GAVE TO DEMONSTRATE THIS
VIEW WERE: RECENT EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT MOVES AGAINST
LEFTIST FORCES WHO HE INDICATED WERE INNOCENT OF ANY
WRONGDOING DURING THE RECENT RIOTS IN CAIRO;
EGYPTIAN CRITICISM OF THE ASWAN DAM WHICH HAS BEEN
OF "FUNDAMENTAL IMPORTANCE" TO EGYPT'S ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT; AND SADAT'S INEFFECTIVE ECONOMIC POLICES
WHICH WERE PUTTING EGYPT IN AN INCREASINGLY SERIOUS
ECONOMIC SITUATION.

4. THE SUBJECT OF EGYPT'S REQUEST FOR MODERN WEAPONS
CAME UP IN THE ECONOMIC CONTEXT. KOROVIN THOUGHT
SADAT HAD NO BASIS TO COMPLAIN ABOUT DIFFERENT TREATMENT
SOVIETS ACCORDED EGYPT AND SYRIA ON ARMS. PART OF
EGYPT'S ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES, HE SAID, RESULTED FROM
SADAT'S POLICY OF ACQUIRING ARMS WHICH THE EGYPTIANS
COULD NEITHER AFFORD NOR USE EFFECTIVELY. WHILE NOT
SAYING SO DIRECTLY KOROVIN IMPLIED THAT THIS WAS NOT
THE CASE WITH SYRIA. IN THE SAME VEIN KOROVIN
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RECOUNTED LONG STORY ABOUT EGYPTIAN MISUSE OF EQUIPMENT
AT THE HELWAN STEEL MILL TO SUPPORT AN ASSERTION THAT
THE EGYPTIANS WERE SQUANDERING THE RESOURCES THEY
ALREADY HAD.

5. ON ARAB-ISRAELI SITUATION, KOROVIN EXPRESSED THE
VIEW THAT THERE SEEMED TO BE LITTLE DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY
IN THE MIDDLE EAST NOW. HE WAS AWARE OF SPECULATION

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ABOUT A POSSIBLE ISRAELI PULLBACK IN SINAI, BUT WAS SKEPTICAL THAT ANYTHING WOULD ACTUALLY DEVELOP. KOROVIN EXPECTEDLY THOUGH THE GENEVA CONFERECE WAS THE ONLY POSSIBILITY FOR SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS IN SETTLING THE ME CRISIS, AND HE STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF GETTING IT GOING AGAIN.

6. COMMENT: WE BELIEVE THE ABOVE REMARKS ARE OF INTEREST BECAUSE KOROVIN, A FAIRLY JUNIOR MEMBER ON THE NOVOSTI STAFF, PROBABLY IS REFLECTING CURRENT PROPAGANDISTS' GUIDANCE ON THE MIDDLE EAST. HIS REMARKS ABOUT THE UNLIKELIHOOD THAT BREZHNEV WILL MAKE A ME VISIT SOON ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE ABASENCE IN THE PRESS OF ANY REFERENCE TO AN UPCOMING VISIT AND SUGGEST THAT, SO FAR AS PROPAGANDISTS ARE CONCERNED, THE TRIP IS OFF INDEFINITELY.
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